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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/61/L.11/Rev.2 and Add.1)]

61/221. Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,

Recalling its resolutions 56/6 of 9 November 2001, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, 57/6 of 4 November 2002, concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, 58/128 of 19 December 2003, on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, 59/23 of 11 November 2004, on the promotion of interreligious dialogue, 59/143 of 15 December 2004, on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001–2010, and 59/199 of 20 December 2004, on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance,

Underlining the importance of promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among human beings in all their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, and recalling that all States have pledged themselves under the Charter to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Taking note of the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome[1] in which the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity, reaffirmed the value of the dialogue on interfaith cooperation and committed themselves to advancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as to encouraging and promoting tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation at the local, national, regional and international levels and among different cultures, civilizations and peoples in order to promote international peace and security,

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] See resolution 60/1.

Alarmed that serious instances of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, including acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, are on the increase in many parts of the world and threaten the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Emphasizing the need, at all levels of society and among nations, for strengthening freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, respect for diversity of culture and religion or belief, dialogue and understanding, which are important elements for peace, and convinced that the guiding principles of democratic society need to be actively promoted by the international community,

Reaffirming that freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity, and that in ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image, care should be exercised that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known,

Affirming the need for all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the targeting of different religions and cultures,[1] contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes and reduce the potential for animosity, clashes and even violence,

Considering that tolerance for cultural, ethnic, and religious and linguistic diversities, as well as dialogue among and within civilizations, is essential for peace, understanding and friendship among individuals and people of different cultures and nations of the world, while manifestations of cultural prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia towards different cultures and religions may generate hatred and violence among peoples and nations throughout the world,

Recognizing the richness of nomadic civilization and its important contribution to promoting dialogue and interaction among all forms of civilization,

Taking note of the valuable contribution of various initiatives at the national, regional and international levels, such as the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, the Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony within the International Community,[2] the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures, Enlightened Moderation, the Informal Meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace,[3] the Islam-Christianity Dialogue, the Moscow World Summit of Religious Leaders and the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, which are all mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated,

Mindful that those initiatives identify areas for practical action in all sectors and levels of society for the promotion of interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue, understanding and cooperation,

Recognizing the commitment of all religions to peace,

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[1] As recognized also in Security Council resolution 1624 (2005).

[2] A/60/254, annex.

[3] See A/60/383.

1. *Affirms* that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace;

2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on interreligious dialogue in the context of its efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, as well as activities related to a culture of peace, and welcomes its focus on concrete action at the global, regional and subregional levels and its flagship project on the promotion of interfaith dialogue;

3. *Recognizes* that respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world contributes to international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations and helps to create an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience;

4. *Also recognizes* that, despite intolerance and conflicts that are creating a divide across countries and regions and constitute a growing threat to peaceful relations among nations, all cultures, religions and civilizations share a common set of universal values and can all contribute to the enrichment of humankind;

5. *Reaffirms* the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments relating to human rights and international law, the universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question;

6. *Urges* States, in compliance with their international obligations, to take all necessary action to combat incitement to or acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by hatred and intolerance based on culture, religion or belief, which may cause discord and disharmony within and among societies;

7. *Also urges* States to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life and to make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation, where necessary, in order to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or belief;

8. *Reaffirms* that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to political and social stability and peace and enrich the cultural diversity and heritage of society as a whole in the States in which such persons live, and urges States to ensure that their political and legal systems reflect the multicultural diversity within their societies and, where necessary, to improve democratic and political institutions, organizations and practices so that they are more fully participatory and avoid the marginalization and exclusion of, and discrimination against, specific sectors of society;

9. *Encourages* Governments to promote, including through education, as well as the development of progressive curricula and textbooks, understanding, tolerance and friendship among human beings in all their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, which will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance, and to apply a gender perspective while doing so, in order to promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly

relations among nations and all racial and religious groups, recognizing that education at all levels is one of the principal means to build a culture of peace;

10. *Recognizes* the contribution of the media to developing a better understanding among all religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples and to facilitating a dialogue among societies, as well as to creating an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience;

11. *Supports* practical initiatives at the regional and national levels by all parties concerned, including the media representatives themselves, to encourage the media to enhance its capacity in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, development and human dignity;

12. *Encourages* the promotion of dialogue among the media from all cultures and civilizations, emphasizes that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, and reaffirms that the exercise of this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals;

13. *Affirms* that the relevant United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, shall endeavour to undertake coordinated measures to promote universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity and to prevent instances of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred against members of any community or adherents of any religion or belief;

14. *Decides* to convene in 2007 a high-level dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, in coordination with other similar initiatives in this area;

15. *Decides also* to consider declaring one of the coming years as the Year of Dialogue among Religions and Cultures;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the systematic and organizational follow-up of all interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational matters within the United Nations system and overall coordination and coherence in its interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation efforts, inter alia, through the designation of a focal unit in the Secretariat to handle these matters;

17. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on the implementation of the present resolution.

83rd plenary meeting
20 December 2006